



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# Conditions of western support for Ukraine

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Sir, Matthew Parris's piece was a masterclass of political commentary, analysis and counsel ("[Our help for Ukraine has strings attached](#)", Feb 11). President Zelensky is undoubtedly brave and charismatic. His experience as a former entertainer has equipped him to captivate an audience: his address to our politicians and others of influence was met with euphoric acclaim and apparently uncritical consensus. Euphoria is of course ephemeral, as political judgment can take longer in the cooking. One hopes that encouraging nods and back-slapping from our politicians mask their doubts and their understanding that we are in for a long haul. Parris's contribution was pertinent and timely. We have been warned.

**Arthur Price-Jones**

Market Harborough, Leics

Sir, No one doubts that financial support for Ukraine's reconstruction will come with conditions, just as US support for Europe had its small print 80 years ago. But our military support to Ukraine is contingent only on its agreement not to harm Russia's territorial integrity, which has a perfectly clear

boundary agreed by almost everyone outside the Kremlin. Matthew Parris says that “We are paying the piper here. The tune is not for Zelensky alone to choose” and suggests that we should have a say “in the drawing up of boundaries”. I disagree. A conviction that a fellow European country deserves peace and security is enough.

**Terence Sinclair**

London SW4

Sir, Your article on the decision of Kyiv Opera House to excise Russian composers from *The Snow Queen* ballet (“[Ukraine gives Tchaikovsky the chop](#)”, Feb 11) brought to mind a recent concert of Tchaikovsky’s Pathétique Symphony (No 6) in the Royal Festival Hall by the Philharmonia Orchestra. It was led by the young Ukrainian conductor Oksana Lyniv. She could have changed the programme but instead gave a riveting account of this symphony: the last few “silent” bars resonated through the hall more than ever. Tchaikovsky’s music and Lyniv’s magnificent conducting of his symphony speaks of a different Russia from the bestial and brutal voice of Putin’s Russia, just in the same way that Rostropovich gave a searing, deeply felt account of Dvorak’s Cello Concerto at the Royal Albert Hall a day after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. We should also recall that Tchaikovsky’s roots can be traced back to Ukraine.

**Dr Derek John Juan Pickard**

Sawston, Cambs

Sir, I disagree with Matthew Parris. The criterion to be used for ending this war must be “unconditional surrender”, as was insisted upon by Eisenhower in 1945. As a result of that Germany has become a peaceful, democratic country (some might argue too peaceful). The nearest direct comparison to the evil being released on Ukraine is the Nazi machine in 1939-45. If we do not apply this as a requirement then every tinpot dictator in the world will take strength from our feebleness and future wars will be guaranteed. In particular, countries such as China must realise that if they attempt to copy Putin’s lead then they will be judged by the same rules. Moreover, reparation must be the responsibility of Russia. Its mineral wealth should be

handed over to Ukraine until such time as the debt is fully repaid.

**Jack Hutson**

Doonfoot, Ayr

### **GROWTH CONFUSION**

Sir, UK GDP once again escaped recession, albeit by a measly 0.01 per cent (“[Recession avoided but UK ‘not out of the woods yet’](#)”, Feb 11). Without doubt it is nothing to be proud of and we need to do better, but only three months ago the Bank of England warned us that we were in for the longest recession on record. The Office for Budget Responsibility then weighed in saying that the downturn would last longer than a year. For those of us in the private sector, who make investment and future employment decisions based on such advice, what downward effect do these economic predictions have? In the business in which I am involved, we certainly reined back our growth forecasts given such a gloomy outlook. I wonder how many much larger businesses have done the same. Perhaps these economists would be better served calculating what negative effect their incorrect forecasts have on UK growth. Without their pessimistic predictions, we might even have a growing economy.

**Peter Higgins**

Co-founder, Charles Tyrwhitt; Steeple Aston, Oxon

### **LEVELLING UP CULTURE**

Sir, Having turned down a promotion to focus on levelling up, Michael Gove needs to engage with Lucy Frazer, the new secretary of state for culture, media and sport, to put culture at the heart of government policies. Research has highlighted a correlation between cities with a limited cultural scene and higher socio-economic deprivation. *Culture and Place in Britain*, a new report by Key Cities in partnership with Arts Council England, makes for stark reading: there are too many towns and cities that are starved of cultural investment and infrastructure, whose communities are suffering as a result. Culture can play a fundamental role in boosting places and supporting communities. From large-scale initiatives such as the UK City of Culture, which has left a lasting legacy in Derry, Hull and

Coventry, to smaller events in local theatres, town halls and streets every day, culture is not just nice to have, it is a vital element of our economic success.

**John Merry**

Chairman of Key Cities and deputy city mayor of Salford

### RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Sir, Simon Nixon ([“Universities’ challenge is to retain their status as leaders in research”](#), Feb 9) is right to highlight the phenomenal success of Britain’s higher education system and the danger of complacency. Indeed, the UK’s world-class universities are a source of innovation, competitive advantage and British soft power. But it is not only Britain’s great institutions of higher education that are rolling back the frontiers of scientific knowledge. Independent research institutions such as the London Institute for Mathematical Sciences have a crucial role to play alongside universities. Other great scientific nations such as the US, Germany and France are bolstered by elite independent research centres, including the Institute for Advanced Study, Max Planck Institutes and IHES. Yet the UK’s own tradition of independent scientific research organisations is woefully lacking. The development of research centres like the London Institute offer world-class researchers the freedom to focus on their work full-time, unlike at universities where they must divide their time between research, teaching and administration. The freedom afforded to researchers by these independent bodies can propel British scientific discovery at an accelerated rate, and often a fraction of the costs.

**Dr Thomas Fink**

Director, London Institute for Mathematical Sciences

### SHIFTING THEOLOGY

Sir, It was good to hear a still, sane voice speaking up for the traditional teaching of the Church of England (“Gay blessings ‘at odds with scripture’”, [letter, Feb 11](#)). Given the secularist approach of our present bishops, this move was only to be expected but I am surprised at the extent to which it has pushed me towards Roman Catholicism. But for *The Book of Common Prayer*, the *Authorised Version of the Bible* and our hymns, I

would unhesitatingly flee. As it is, I hang between Churches but feel incapable of ever again supporting or trusting the CofE with its foundation of shifting sands and moral manoeuvrability.

**Dr Amanda Vance**

Rustington, W Sussex

### **EMPEROR'S ABODE**

Sir, The latest call to repatriate the mortal remains of Napoleon III from England to France is as misconceived as its many predecessors (“[Our last emperor should be brought home, say French](#)”, Feb 11). Before his exile, the Emperor intended to be buried at Saint-Denis, alongside the kings and queens of France. A burial chapel was constructed there by Viollet-le-Duc but this was rendered obsolete by the collapse of the Second Empire in 1870 and it was destroyed under the Fourth Republic.

The Emperor was buried instead in England, first at Chislehurst, Kent, where he died in 1873, and then at Farnborough in Hampshire, where his widow, the Empress Eugénie, founded an abbey. The Empress conceived St Michael's Abbey as a permanent arrangement and she constituted it as such in English law. The return of the Emperor's remains to France is therefore without any moral or legal basis.

**Professor Anthony Geraghty**

University of York; author of *The Empress Eugénie in England: Art, Architecture, Collecting*

### **FUELLING TRANS ANGST**

Sir, Janice Turner rightly says that Department for Education guidance should make it clear that boys and girls should be allowed to express their gender identity via hair length and make-up etc (“[Schools fuel trans angst by sidelining parents](#)”, Feb 11). A school uniform offering a free choice of skirt, trousers, shorts, shirt and tie or blouse to all pupils would go a long way to children not feeling they need to make a “statement” about their gender.

**Zena Durrant**

Misterton, Somerset

Sir, Has the word “tomboy” been lost? At 11 I and all my friends wanted to be boys. At 13 we all had crushes on older girls, nothing sexual just admiration. At 14 I had a boyfriend.

I think I’m too old for this senseless world.

**Jane Midgley**

Axbridge, Somerset

### **BRAVE TRIBUTE**

Sir, Ann Treneman’s Notebook (Feb 11) on the [death of her husband](#), Ian, was beautifully and bravely written. Those of us who have been through such traumas are full of admiration and sympathy for her.

**Sue Morley**

Dartington, Devon

### **FAST-FOOD LEFTOVER**

Sir, Regarding your story about the McDonald’s playing classical music (“[A little night music to repel McYobs](#)”, Feb 11), I used to go regularly to McDonald’s in Bournemouth town centre and was surprised not only to hear classical music but to have a well known broadsheet to read (*The Daily Telegraph*). I asked the manager one day why his outlet was so highbrow. “We have no choice about the music” he said, “but we have all the newspapers in the morning — it’s just that all the others get stolen.”

**Sally Wilton**

Bournemouth

### **TRAIN OF THOUGHT**

Sir, Stations are a rich source of grafitti ([letters](#), Feb 10 & [11](#)). In the late 1970s British Rail started recruiting female train drivers for the first time. The posters often had added to them the slogan: “Women’s right to choo-choos.”

**Bruce Hunt**

Linton, Cambs

### **POTATO POSSESSION**

Sir, Anthony Collins (letter, Feb 10) carries a [walnut in his pocket](#) so that he can identify his coat. Another idea is to keep a

potato in your coat pocket, like Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*.

**Pauline Trapp**

Banwell, Somerset

### TOE IN THE MARKET

Sir, A hole in a sock, sometimes called a potato, is a sign of our shared humanity ([letters](#), Feb 10 & [11](#)). When selling our home in the Scottish Borders we approached three estate agents for quotes and selected one from a rather posh office in Edinburgh. Its agent asked: “Why did you choose our company?” My wife replied: “When you took off your muddy shoes to view our house you had a hole in your sock.”

**David Jeffrey**

West Malvern, Worcs

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